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NAVAL WAR COLLEGE
Newport, R.I.

A Better Disaster Response:
Building on a Solid Foundation

by

Michael L. Smith

LCDR USN

A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Joint Military Operations.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

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Abstract

Recent analysis has shown the Foreign Humanitarian Assistance (FHA) mission to be a qualified strategic success. However, beneath the strategic success story is the fact that the *ad hoc* nature of FHA mission organization as prescribed by current doctrine runs contrary to the established operational principle of unity of effort. This paper will assess several models that seek to rectify this problem through establishing coordinating bodies within the current Joint Task Force structure. However, to establish the required unity of effort Geographic Combatant Commanders are better served through the creation of standing Joint Interagency Task Force-FHA headquarters. Unfortunately, the proposed creation of a standing JIATF-FHA headquarters will undoubtedly come at a cost. Staffing JIATF-FHA headquarters elements will require substantial manning and budgetary commitments on operational commanders and United States Government agencies alike. To that end, current policy direction and initiatives recognize the need for greater civilian engagement and support the costs associated with the FHA mission.

A Better Disaster Response:

Building on a Solid Foundation

A thousand words will not leave so deep an impression as one deed - Henrik Ibsen

... by-and-by will the deed and the plan be judged by the motive that lieth below - Lewis J. Bates

Introduction

In the early days of 1991, the world watched as longtime enemies and allies stood side by side to buttress the foundations of international order, forcefully removing Saddam Hussein from Kuwait and widely announcing the dawn of a New World Order.¹ The proclamation by President George H.W. Bush was not merely rhetoric. As the world lay witness to the unmistakable thaw between the United States and the soon to be the *former* Soviet Union, tectonic shifts were occurring under the feet of United States military men and women everywhere. These changes would cause a reprioritization of missions away from the defense of the GIUK and Fulda Gaps and towards more nuanced and ambiguous mission sets now folded into the modern concept of the Range of Military Operations (ROMO).² Interestingly, only five months after the start of Desert Storm, over 7,000 homebound troops would find themselves part of Operation Sea Angel, an effort to save tens of thousands in Bangladesh on a mission we now call Foreign Humanitarian Assistance (FHA).³

From 2004 to 2006, the United States has participated in seventeen FHA operations both large and small.⁴ The latest large-scale mission, Operation Sea Angel II, found the

(All notes appear in shortened form. For full details, see the appropriate entry in the bibliography)

¹ Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, 400.

² Both vestiges of the Cold War, the Greenland, Iceland and United Kingdom (GIUK) Gap formed a strategic chokepoint between NATO and Soviet naval forces. Similarly, the Fulda Gap comprised a lowland corridor within East Germany where NATO and Soviet armored forces would clash in the event of war.

³ Salvage, "Operation Sea Angel: Bangladesh Disaster Relief," 90.

⁴ Joint Center for Operational Analysis, "Joint Lessons Learned: Keys to Successful International Humanitarian Assistance and Relief Operations 2004 to 2006," 8. These numbers merely reflect the disaster relief missions.

United States military again in Bangladesh working to save lives and reduce human suffering. Recent analysis indicates the FHA mission to be a strategic success. Polling completed following the 2004 tsunami relief efforts and the 2005 Pakistani earthquake mission show a marked increase in the favorability of the U.S. from polling done prior to the missions.⁵ However, beneath these strategic success stories, perhaps hidden by them, is the fact that the *ad hoc* nature of FHA mission organization and execution as prescribed by current doctrine runs contrary to established operational principles and elements. Current operations in support of FHA missions lack adequate unity of effort and are unable to respond efficiently and effectively to the world's disasters. Several models available seek to address this problem and will be discussed in this analysis. However, none fully addresses the shortfalls currently implicit within FHA doctrine. Geographic Combatant Commanders (GCC) and the victims of regional disasters are better served through the creation of standing Joint Interagency Task Force (JIATF)-FHA headquarters elements. Unfortunately, the proposed establishment of a standing JIATF-FHA headquarters will undoubtedly come at a cost. Additionally, staffing JIATF-FHA headquarters elements will require substantial manning and budgetary commitments on operational commanders and United States Government (USG) agencies alike. To that end, current policy direction and initiatives recognize the need for greater civilian engagement and support for the costs associated with the FHA mission.

In addition, the U.S. was engaged in eight additional missions focused on Humanitarian Assistance during the same period.

⁵ Pew Research Center, "America's Image in the World: Findings from the Pew Global Attitudes Project," 8-9.

FHA Strategic Foundation

Prior to embarking on an operational assessment of Department of Defense (DOD) doctrine as it applies to the FHA mission, it is essential to note that the FHA mission itself is not DOD led. Instead, the program falls under the Department of State (DOS)/United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and specifically within the USAID's Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA). The OFDA mandate directs their organization to be, "... responsible for facilitating and coordinating U.S. Government emergency assistance overseas... OFDA provides humanitarian assistance to save lives, alleviate human suffering, and reduce the social and economic impact of humanitarian emergencies worldwide."⁶ However, recent history has shown that while USAID/OFDA is tasked with the FHA mission, its lack of funding, manning and resources have meant that the DOD has taken on much of the planning and execution of major disaster relief operations worldwide.⁷

Before initiating an assessment of the current FHA *operational* construct, and certainly before recommending changes to it, the *strategic* foundation that underpins the FHA mission must be established. If it can be determined that the operational objectives of FHA do not support the larger strategic objectives then an entire re-evaluation of the mission should be undertaken rather than merely recommending modifications to make operational execution more effective. Fortunately, the strategic guidance from which FHA springs forth is quite clear. In the president's 2006 National Security Strategy, he clearly states that, "These challenges [natural disasters] are not traditional national security concerns, such as the conflict of arms or ideologies. But if left unaddressed they can threaten national

⁶ U.S. Agency for International Development, "Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance Homepage," 1.

⁷ Flournoy, "Achieving Unity of Effort in Interagency Operations," 2.

security.”⁸ Drawing from this statement, the Secretary of Defense’s National Defense Strategy directs the armed forces to prepare for, “... a spectrum of challenges, including... natural and pandemic disasters.”⁹ The strategic foundation for FHA operations set, the fact that data exists directly supporting the conclusion that humanitarian assistance abroad reinforces U.S. strategic objectives only helps to bolster the case. In polls taken following the 2004 tsunami relief effort and another taken after operations in support of the 2005 Pakistani earthquake it was shown that the presence and relief offered and executed by the U.S. had a direct impact on U.S. favorability in these predominately Muslim states.¹⁰ Additionally, studies done by the Center for Naval Analysis have shown that humanitarian assistance operations have a direct and positive effect on political and economic stability.¹¹ Having established that 1) the mission of Foreign Humanitarian Assistance is rooted in concrete strategic objectives and reflected in specific operational tasking, and 2) that FHA operations have shown themselves to be directly supporting of the strategic objectives, a more critical analysis of the FHA operations themselves can be made.

Methodology and Assumptions

First, it is critical to differentiate between external and internal perspectives when assessing the effectiveness of FHA at the operational level. Humanitarian aid as viewed by external audiences (the affected region or the international community as a whole) is absolute in nature with the success of the operation being the fact that aid is or is not rendered. However, internal measurements of effectiveness need to be judged on a relative scale that reflects the difference between our *potential* effectiveness and the *actual* effect brought to

⁸ U.S. President, *National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, 47.

⁹ U.S. Department of Defense, *National Defense Strategy*, 1.

¹⁰ Pew Research Center, “America’s Image in the World: Findings from the Pew Global Attitudes Project,” 8-9.

¹¹ Heybey, Berta and Bush, “*Do Crisis Response Operations Affect Political and Economic Stability?*” 50.

bear towards the relief of human suffering in an FHA operation. This difference between the potential capabilities of a responding force and the actual execution is a product of the Clausewitzian friction and fog uniquely inherent to all FHA operations.

Second, the primary vehicle for this assessment will be to judge current doctrine and published proposals against their ability to provide rapid speed of response and adequate unity of effort in the unique and complex arena of FHA. Established Joint Doctrine states that the purpose of the FHA mission is, "... to relieve or reduce the results of natural or manmade disasters or other endemic conditions such as human suffering, disease or privation that might present a serious threat to life or loss of property."¹² However, while this definition covers both the realms of humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, the focus of this paper will be to analyze several organizational models and their impact on their response to regional crises (e.g. natural disasters).

Third, it should come as no surprise that reducing the time between a disaster and the arrival of assistance to mitigate human suffering and the damage of property is of the highest priority. Reporting on the use of military assets in response to natural disasters, the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute asserts that, "*Timeliness* seems to be the main factor affecting the effectiveness of foreign military assets in a natural disaster response..."¹³ In fact, the same report concludes that a slow or disorganized response by military forces may be worse than no response at all.¹⁴ The unique immediacy and impacts related to the operational factor of *time* in humanitarian aid missions helps to isolate it as the most important variable when assessing mission risks and their mitigation. Therefore, the

¹² U.S. Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Tactics, Techniques and Procedures for Foreign Humanitarian Assistance*, vii.

¹³ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, *Effectiveness of Foreign Military Assets in Natural Disaster Response*, xii.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, xii.

time between the specific initiating event (typhoon, flood, earthquake, etc.) and its relief through the efforts of the responding force is directly proportional to mission accomplishment. Simply stated, reducing response time reduces human suffering.

Lastly, the DOD dictionary (JP 1-02) defines the term unity of effort as, “Coordination and cooperation toward common objectives, even if the participants are not necessarily part of the same command or organization - the product of successful unified action.”¹⁵ This concise definition seems to address the needs and attributes of the FHA environment directly. FHA missions are crises by their very nature and do not allow for lengthy prior planning, thoughtful force allocation or prior training. Optimally, the forces selected would best complement the humanitarian requirements; forces normally trained in support and constabulary functions as well as having a background in working with intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations (IGOs and NGOs respectively) in a more diplomatically driven environment. Unfortunately, the nature and immediacy of FHA operations does not always allow for optimal force allocation, most often sourcing units in the geographic area that can respond quickly.¹⁶ This aspect of FHA missions poses a direct threat to unified effort in support of the mission. It is generally accepted that unity of effort is an important principle of operations, but in a crisis where mere hours can separate success from failure, unity of effort is *the* operational principle. In House testimony before the Armed Services Committee, Under Secretary of Defense for Policy Michelle Flournoy stated that,

At the end of the day, unity of effort across the U.S. government is not just about being more efficient or even more effective in operations. It can

¹⁵ U.S. Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, 578.

¹⁶ Stackpole, “Enhancing Cooperation in Disaster Relief: The Asian Tsunami as a Case Study – Summary for ADM William J. Fallon,” 1.

determine whether the United States succeeds or fails in a given intervention. It can also determine whether the ultimate costs of success—both dollars spent and lives lost or forever changed—are as low as possible or higher than necessary. In this sense, unity of effort is not just something that is nice to have; it is imperative.¹⁷

In summary, this analysis will look at the current doctrinal FHA model and three proposed structural and/or procedural changes and weigh them against their ability to create and sustain unity of effort while simultaneously compressing the time between disaster and response.

Model 1: Current Ad Hoc

Current doctrine for the planning and execution of FHA operations can be found within JP 3-07.6 (Joint Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures for Foreign Humanitarian Assistance). When tasked to respond to a disaster within their area of responsibility (AOR) the GCC is advised to create a Joint Task Force (JTF) to plan and direct relief efforts. This JTF is created, “... to accomplish missions with specific, limited objectives...”¹⁸ and additionally, “... is dissolved by the proper authority when the purpose for which it was created has been achieved or when it is no longer required.”¹⁹ Simply put, doctrine directs the construction of an *ad hoc* JTF command and control organization mobilized quickly and with available forces in order to plan for and provide assistance to regions experiencing a disaster or other humanitarian need. This *ad hoc* nature of the created command structure has critical implications for rapid planning and response to contingencies within the AOR. The disadvantage inherent in this construct is not lost within the doctrine and, in order to assuage the immediate critique that command structures not accustomed to FHA operations

¹⁷ Flournoy, “Achieving Unity of Effort in Interagency Operations,” 3.

¹⁸ U.S. Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Operations*, xiv.

¹⁹ U.S. Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Operations*, II-12.

would be hard pressed to plan effectively, the doctrine states that the, “JTF organization for FHA is similar to traditional military organizations.”²⁰ However, if this were truly the case, it would probably be unnecessary to promulgate a 157-page doctrine statement to discuss the unique nature of the mission.

By their very nature, the timing and effects of natural disasters are nearly impossible to predict with any certainty making contingency planning for future events virtually impossible. This fact, combined with the *ad hoc* basis of the JTF, creates specific dynamics that have critical impacts on the ability of a force to respond quickly and execute operations efficiently. First, a JTF planning team brought together to address an impending disaster will likely have hours, rather than days or weeks, to address the myriad of issues facing it. This planning environment, far from static, is executed simultaneously with forces en route to the disaster. Within hours USAID Disaster Assistance Response Teams (DARTs) and Humanitarian Aid Survey Teams (HASTs) will be feeding information and requirements to the planning effort, the Ambassador(s) of the affected regions will be setting diplomatic priorities and the host nations will be establishing contacts with NGO and IGO groups to affect assistance. As can be gleaned, the challenge of executing a swift and efficient operation under the compressed timelines and an extremely dynamic planning environment is difficult for a cohesive and seasoned FHA planning team, let alone a newly formed JTF unaccustomed to the intricacies of the FHA environment. Time that should be directed towards the stated mission of alleviating suffering must be used, to a great extent, understanding the doctrinal concepts of FHA, building a team to reflect the doctrine and establishing communications with the myriad of actors involved in the mission. The *ad hoc*

²⁰ U.S. Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Tactics, Techniques and Procedures for Foreign Humanitarian Assistance*, III-1

nature of the current FHA JTF construct works against the principle of unity of effort, encourages a lack of corporate knowledge, training and cohesiveness, and creates an impediment to swift execution and efficient operations.²¹ Additionally, new command relationships used to address FHA operations fail to leverage established relationships and networks built through the GCC's ongoing Theater Security Cooperation Program (TSCP).²²

To offset the identified shortfalls of the *ad hoc* FHA JTF and in response to lessons learned, GCCs have used a nucleus of planners from the GCC standing joint force headquarters (SJFHQ) element to augment the FHA JTF.²³ This concept certainly increases unity of effort and efficiency in planning and has been used to good effect within numerous FHA operations.²⁴ However, unless the GCCs SJFHQ is persistent, dedicated to the FHA mission and has manned, trained and established the essential USG, regional, NGO and IGO contacts, then the JTF/SJFHQ team faces the same challenges to mission success - the ability to quickly plan and execute in a highly dynamic FHA environment.

Model 2: Ad Hoc, but Coordinated

Having assessed the essential weakness of *ad hoc* JTF creation by the GCC in support of the FHA mission as a critical lack of experience, training and established relationships that influence unity of effort and the ability to plan quickly and efficiently, a more persistent and dedicated organization must be pursued. In order to rectify this structural defect within FHA doctrine, the construct of a Joint Interagency Coordination Group (JIACG) has been

²¹ Joint Center for Operational Analysis, "Joint Lessons Learned: Keys to Successful International Humanitarian Assistance and Relief Operations 2004 to 2006," 2, and Moore, *Models of Relief Learning from Exemplary Practices in International Disaster Management*, 60.

²² Joint Center for Operational Analysis, "Joint Lessons Learned: Keys to Successful International Humanitarian Assistance and Relief Operations 2004 to 2006," 41.

²³ Deptula, "Operation Unified Assistance (OUA): CSF-536 Joint Air Force Component Commander (JFACC)/Air Forces Commander (AFFOR) Lessons and Observations," 19.

²⁴ Joint Center for Operational Analysis, "Joint Lessons Learned: Keys to Successful International Humanitarian Assistance and Relief Operations 2004 to 2006," 18.

proposed and used in the field to a limited extent.²⁵ Researching just this challenge, LCDR Beth Movinsky deftly assesses the current weakness of the system and proposes the creation of JIACGs directly within the GCC staffs to “close the distance to... seamless execution,” and thereby decreasing response time and increasing efficiency of U.S. FHA response.²⁶ Per Joint Forces Command guidance, the JIACG’s purpose is to,

... coordinate with U.S. government civilian agencies operational planning in contingency operations. It supports day-to-day planning at the combatant commander headquarters and advises planners regarding civilian agency operations, capabilities, and limitations. It also provides perspective in the coordinated use of national power.²⁷

... and more specifically,

Liaison organizations such as a JIACG can help promote interaction and cooperation among diverse agencies... The goal - to develop and promote the unity of effort needed to accomplish a specific mission - can be achieved by establishing an atmosphere of trust and cooperation.”²⁸

Based on the drawbacks of the *ad hoc* JTF model, the establishment of the JIACG within the GCC is certainly a step in the right direction. Within the JIACG concept, the key enablers as they pertain to the FHA mission are the JIACGs ability to facilitate coordination and establish non-traditional relationships within USG agencies and NGO/IGO groups.²⁹ In actual execution the JIACG has proven its value. During operations within Haiti in 2001, Southern Command’s standing JIACG formed the nucleus of a Joint Interagency Planning Group (JIAPG) that was instrumental in identifying tasks, force requirements and priorities

²⁵ Joint Center for Operational Analysis, “Joint Lessons Learned: Keys to Successful International Humanitarian Assistance and Relief Operations 2004 to 2006,” 37.

²⁶ Movinsky, “Joint Interagency Coordination Group (JIACC) Contingency Planning Collaboration Between Combatant Command and the Office of US foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) for Foreign Humanitarian Assistance,” 14.

²⁷ U.S. Joint Forces Command, “USJFCOM Fact Sheet: Joint Interagency Coordination Group,” 1.

²⁸ U.S. Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Operations*, VII-10.

²⁹ Current United Nations protocols for planning incorporate the “Cluster” planning concept making experience and established relationships with responding organizations even more relevant. For more on the Cluster planning approach see: United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, “Cluster Approach,” 1.

for the responding *ad hoc* JTF.³⁰ Identifying the need for a permanent USAID/OFDA planning presence within the GCC, LCDR Movinsky proposes to staff the GCC with a USAID Office liaison officer, which would ensure a ready subject matter expert (SME) was on-call within the GCC should tasking arrive.

Unfortunately, although the JIACG construct gives the perception of greater unity of effort, it does not carry the actual authority for planning or execution of joint operations in support of FHA missions.³¹ The lack of authority and unity of effort this causes creates friction and complexity that has a direct and negative effect on the ability of an *ad hoc* JTF to respond in a rapid and efficient manner.³² Additionally, past execution of JIACG led FHA operations have shown themselves to be inadequate due to limited representation by essential interagency involvement during training and planning prior to disaster events.³³ Therefore, if it has been shown that *ad hoc* JTF creation in support of emergent FHA missions, with or without the benefit of a standing JIACG, does not allow for the most effective response to worldwide disasters, a solution that allows for vigorous interagency coordination in the planning and execution of FHA missions must be pursued.

Model 3: Ad Hoc, but Fully Integrated

The second phase of the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) report, *Beyond Goldwater-Nichols: U.S. Government and Defense Reform for a New Strategic Era* begins by stating that, “Interagency operations are no longer rare. Yet crises are still managed largely on a case-by-case basis, with interagency coordination mechanisms

³⁰ Joint Center for Operational Analysis, “Joint Lessons Learned: Keys to Successful International Humanitarian Assistance and Relief Operations 2004 to 2006,” 37.

³¹ U.S. Joint Forces Command. “Commander’s Handbook for the Joint Interagency Coordination Group,” vi.

³² Flournoy, “Achieving Unity of Effort in Interagency Operations,” 3.

³³ Perry and Travayiakos, “Building Capacity across the Civil-Military Spectrum,” 38.

reinvented each time. While such *ad hoc* processes are agile, they are neither coherent nor durable.”³⁴ The analysis of current interagency constructs provided by CSIS is thorough and thoughtful. In agreement with the opinion of others in the disaster relief field, the CSIS assesses the current JIACG concept as a good starting point, but incapable of fully integrating the disparate USG entities required to affect successful mission planning and execution.³⁵ In an effort to overcome the inherent inefficiencies and the *ad hoc* nature of current FHA doctrine, the researchers propose a more formally integrated command and control structure empowered, unlike the JIACGs and JIAPGs discussed above, to plan and execute emergent missions such as FHA.

The CSIS research proposes the establishment of an Interagency Crisis Planning Team (ICPT) at the GCC level.³⁶ This planning team would be tasked with the creation of a regional campaign plan for missions directed towards security, stability, transition and reconstruction (SSTR) operations. In addition to a planning mandate, the ICPT would be tasked with intra-regional training and capacity building within the disaster assistance community. In the event of a crisis, the Combatant Commander through the ICPT, would stand up a core staff comprising a Joint Interagency Task Force (JIATF) for each FHA mission. The unique aspect of this proposal is the creation of a dual Interagency/DOD command of the JIATF through the CJTF commander and a “President’s Special Representative.”³⁷ This model is not entirely new however. The dual structure that both General Petraeus and Ambassador

³⁴ Murdoch and Flournoy, *Beyond Goldwater-Nichols: U.S. Government and Defense Reform for a New Strategic Era Phase 2 Report*, 6.

³⁵ Murdoch and Flournoy, *Beyond Goldwater-Nichols: U.S. Government and Defense Reform for a New Strategic Era Phase 2 Report*, 45 is in concurrence with the Perry and Travayiakis, “Building Capacity Across the Civil-Military Spectrum,” 38.

³⁶ Murdoch and Flournoy, *Beyond Goldwater-Nichols: U.S. Government and Defense Reform for a New Strategic Era Phase 2 Report*, 51.

³⁷ *Ibid*, 49.

Crocker established in Iraq is a key and very successful example of, not mere coordination, but of true interagency command.³⁸ Though the analysis does not specifically identify the agency of origin for this representative, it can be assumed that he/she would be a representative of the Department of State/USAID. In the event of a crisis, this organization would be established and deploy with the tasked CJTF to the joint operations area (JOA) and work with the CJTF to organize and prioritize efforts throughout the interagency spectrum as well as work with national, international and non-governmental partners. However, the established JIATF would require fundamental changes in how interagency processes currently work. The JIATFs ability to share information, communicate, fund operations and fully integrate command and control organizations across agencies would be critical to ensure its effectiveness and ability to establish unity of effort for the FHA mission.³⁹ Lastly, the CSIS report highlights the need for any designated JIATF established in a crisis to be staffed with individuals with, "... a deeper understanding of (and perhaps appreciation for) the capabilities each agency can – and cannot – bring to an operation."⁴⁰

Of all the models discussed thus far, the CSIS construct most closely addresses the current doctrinal deficit within the FHA mission. Establishing a persistent organization, through the ICPT, tasked with planning and training towards the FHA mission will reduce much of the time required by responding forces to understand regional idiosyncrasies, multinational capabilities and establish vital

³⁸ Schaub, "Really Soft Power," 2.

³⁹ Murdoch and Flournoy, *Beyond Goldwater-Nichols: U.S. Government and Defense Reform for a New Strategic Era Phase 2 Report*, 49.

⁴⁰ Ibid, 49.

relationships. Additionally, best practices initiated by the ICPT can be used by responding forces to increase efficiency of operations. Lastly, the dual command structure proposed offers the greatest ability to establish clear unity of effort across the response agency spectrum. However, this construct still lacks a cohesive and experienced staff core to respond to crises. Regardless of the effectiveness of the ICPT, a responding JIATF established *at the time* of the disaster will undoubtedly face the same challenges that *ad hoc* JTFs encounter in the previous models. Without a persistent and standing JIATF, forming the core of the headquarters element that would respond to an assigned FHA mission, the GCC cannot minimize response time to regional disasters nor can critical unity of effort be assured for mission planning and execution.

Model 4: The Answer - Persistent Integration

Having stepped through current and proposed organizational models as they pertain to the preparation and response to foreign natural disasters by U.S. forces, it has been shown that without a persistent and engaged interagency task force structure, the ability to respond quickly and operate efficiently is severely restricted. At the heart of the current doctrinal faults lies the *ad hoc* nature of JTF creation. As Deputy Secretary Flournoy flatly states, “This *ad hoc* approach has kept the United States from learning from its mistakes and improving its performance in complex contingencies over time. It is no wonder that U.S. personnel who have served in multiple operations over the last 10-15 years lament feeling a bit like Sisyphus.”⁴¹ By bringing together command structures, planners and execution forces only when needed, the ability to leverage seasoned planners with the training,

⁴¹ Flournoy, “Achieving Unity of Effort in Interagency Operations,” 2.

relationships and the experience to execute operations is missing. By creating a standing structure with the authority, funding and capacity to plan and execute missions in a fully integrated interagency environment, the ability to achieve essential unity of effort and a swift response to emergent situations is increased immensely.

The solution to the problem lies in the doctrinal establishment of a standing JIATF-FHA attached to each GCC. As the Movinski article eludes to and the CSIS analysis proposes, this organization would be led through a dual command relationship between DOD and USAID.⁴² However, this would not be the extent of interagency manning for the JIATF-FHA. A full commitment by all USG agencies must be made to ensure maximum effectiveness and include not just DOD, DOS and USAID representatives, but also representatives from the Departments of Agriculture, Commerce and the Treasury to name a few.

At the outset of an impending FHA mission, coordination would begin within USAID (as lead agency) and DOD to task the responding GCC. The assigned Combatant Commander would then provide mission orders to the JIATF-FHA. Having established pertinent SOPs and best practices with regard to disaster response, both the DOD and USAID/OFDA would source and deploy DARTs and HASTs to the crisis area. Simultaneously, the JIATF-FHA headquarters element would establish communications with responding organizations, U.S. or otherwise, and commence deployment to the scene of the disaster. Once there, the core staff could interface quickly and efficiently with the host nation, country team and relief organizations. Having planned and trained for such eventualities, the establishment of critical organizational organs such as the Humanitarian

⁴² Movinsky, “Joint Interagency Coordination Group (JIACC) Contingency Planning Collaboration Between Combatant Command and the Office of US foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) for Foreign Humanitarian Assistance,” 5.

Assistance Coordination Center (HACC), Civil-Military Operations Center (CMOC), JTF headquarters and Multinational Planning Augmentation Team (MPAT) could be accomplished in a swift and expeditious manner with a high degree of unity of effort.⁴³ It is important to note that standing these organizations up in an expeditious manner directly contributes to timely response to critical needs throughout the disaster area. This is an especially daunting task for current *ad hoc* JTF organizations, leading to time extending friction, poor mission prioritization and common misallocation of life saving resources.⁴⁴

Recent analysis of joint FHA doctrine and numerous documented operational lessons learned have identified the current *ad hoc* nature of FHA response as a structural defect that adversely affects the mission.⁴⁵ Both proposed models (*ad hoc*, but coordinated and *ad hoc*, but integrated) discussed to differing degrees, the need for a persistent staff structure to address GCC FHA planning and execution. This analysis finds that while both proposals address the structural issues, they do not address the problem of persistency, which directly impacts the ability to quickly establish essential unity of effort. This persistency can be achieved through the creation of the proposed standing JIATF-FHA. Unfortunately, this organization comes at cost in money and manpower. The question to policy makers becomes whether or not the FHA mission constitutes enough of a strategic imperative to direct the funding and manning of the JIATF-FHA as proposed. Increased interagency coordination to

⁴³ The MPAT concept, developed in 1999, is a powerful organizational tool that allows for greater coordination between numerous nations, IGOs and NGOs: U.S. Pacific Command as reproduced in U.S. Naval War College Joint Military Operations Department, "Operation Unified Assistance Case Study (NWC 3096A)," E-4.

⁴⁴ U.S. Pacific Command as reproduced in U.S. Naval War College Joint Military Operations Department, "Operation Unified Assistance Case Study (NWC 3096A)," E-2.

⁴⁵ Joint Center for Operational Analysis, "Joint Lessons Learned: Keys to Successful International Humanitarian Assistance and Relief Operations 2004 to 2006," 2, and Murdoch and Flourney, *Beyond Goldwater-Nichols: U.S. Government and Defense Reform for a New Strategic Era Phase 2 Report*, 6.

the level discussed in this paper is one of current and heated national debate.⁴⁶ An analysis of strategic direction at the national and operational level would lead the reader to believe that the benefits gleaned from national response to international disasters is a strategic imperative which will only increase in the future.⁴⁷ This being the case, the establishment of regional JIATF-FHA elements folded within a rationalized DOS/Unified Command Plan (UCP)⁴⁸ under each GCC should be directed by executive order with the funding and resources provided through Congressional action.⁴⁹

Building Capacity When Not Saving Lives

Standing up a full time JIATF-FHA for the planning and execution of regional disasters with the GCC's AOR is a large investment that, while in full accord with both national and operational priorities, is difficult to justify if not fully engaged when not responding to FHA missions. To realize the highest return on investment the JIATF-FHA would be engaged, on an individual country basis or regionally, in developing local capacities and programs to reduce the need for outside assistance and building strong partnerships throughout the AOR. Far from being just a good idea that builds beneficial relationships and partner capabilities, capacity building is an assigned task as delineated in DOD Directive 3000.05 (Military Support for Stability, Security, Transition, and

⁴⁶ Numerous articles seek to address this problem: Schaub, "Really Soft Power," 2, Murdoch and Weitz, "Beyond Goldwater-Nichols: New Proposals for Defense Reform," 34-36 and Flournoy, "Flournoy: Create a U.S. Response Corps," 1.

⁴⁷ Flournoy, "Achieving Unity of Effort in Interagency Operations," 13.

⁴⁸ Current DOS and DOD global distribution of geographic responsibility is not the same. This difference creates a significant lack of harmony between DOS and DOD strategic planning and execution. Creating a common UCP would increase immensely the unity of effort for any interagency operations. See U.S. Department of State, *Strategic Plan Fiscal Years 2007-2012*, 44-55 and Department of Defense, "Unified Command Plan," 1.

⁴⁹ Flournoy, "Achieving Unity of Effort in Interagency Operations," 13.

Reconstruction (SSTR) Operations).⁵⁰ As a dual command organization, the JIATF-FHA would be ideally situated to work hand-in-glove with Department of State efforts towards these capacity building efforts. A mandate to work directly with regional disaster planners falls squarely within the DOS Strategic plan that directs U.S. assistance agencies to, “... build the capacity of affected countries, American responders, and the international community to reduce disaster risks, prepare for rapid response, and increase the affected population’s ability to cope with and recover from the effects of a disaster.”⁵¹ This capacity building would be accomplished through direct training opportunities, development of tailored best practices, engagement of country teams into the disaster planning process and the design and deployment of open source, unclassified information sharing tools that are vital to the rapid and efficient information sharing required in a disaster response environment.⁵²

Conclusion

In his extensive review of the 2004 tsunami relief efforts, Dr. Bruce Elleman of the Naval War College concluded that, while not perfect, the relief efforts, “... dramatically improved U.S.-Indonesian government-to-government and military to-military relations, and so furthered the goals of the global war on terror and of regional cooperation.”⁵³ As discussed earlier in this paper, objective post-disaster analysis supports this view. When disaster relief efforts are viewed externally, especially from the viewpoint of a man, woman or child that is suffering, there can be no doubt that the herculean efforts made by our men

⁵⁰ U.S. Department of Defense, *Military Support for Stability, Security, Transition, and Reconstruction (SSTR) Operations*, 3.

⁵¹ U.S. Department of State/USAID, *Strategic Plan Fiscal Years 2007-2012*, 32.

⁵² Stackpole, “Enhancing Cooperation in Disaster Relief: The Asian Tsunami as a Case Study – Summary for ADM William J. Fallon,” 3.

⁵³ Elleman, “Waves of Hope: The U.S. Navy’s Response to the Tsunami in Northern Indonesia,” 101.

and women in uniform are an unqualified good and very difficult to criticize. However, and as this analysis has sought to point out, the internal operational view of the FHA mission leaves much to be improved. The ability to achieve unity of effort throughout the interagency team and to respond quickly and efficiently is central to successful FHA missions at the operational level. Without the ability to achieve this unity of effort, the Combatant Commanders are left with *ad hoc* organizations with little or no experience in disaster relief, ill prepared for the mission and that take valuable time to stand-up. In this environment, responding JTFs are forced to re-learn valuable lessons that have been documented time and time again.⁵⁴

The challenge that the GCCs face with interagency coordination and execution is certainly not an operational anomaly of the FHA mission itself. The ability to project soft power and establish influence within the Combatant Commanders' AOR, increasingly, is not a matter of military force alone. Combatant and Diplomatic commanders must be able to draw on established and integrated staff structures that are in full alignment and leverage the unique capabilities of all USG sources of power. However, while this viewpoint is widely held it seems there are deeply entrenched constituencies within all USG agencies willing to place parochialism before national security.⁵⁵ Any structural changes that reflect the proposed establishment of a dual-command standing JIATF-FHA within the GCC staff will not happen until these larger issues are addressed. Until then, American men and women in uniform and out, doing the best they can with what they are given, will answer the call when needed and work tirelessly to relieve pain and suffering when and where it occurs.

⁵⁴ Flournoy, "Achieving Unity of Effort in Interagency Operations," 2.

⁵⁵ Major structural shifts towards greater integration between USG agencies is a major theme of many in the policy field – Campbell and Flournoy, *The Inheritance and the Way Forward*, 28, Murdoch and Weitz, "Beyond Goldwater-Nichols: New Proposals for Defense Reform," 40, and Schaub, "Really Soft Power," 1.

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